

CANADA.

15

A PAPER

BY

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READ BEFORE THE CLUB.

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AMID the strife of parties and contention of factionists it is refreshing to turn the attention to the quiet and steady progress of our country—to drop political speculating, and devote a short time to the history, position, and prospects of our Dominion.

There is not, perhaps, in the civilized world, a country of equal importance with Canada; and of which, at the same time there is so little known in other countries. Although it has been known to Europeans for nearly four centuries, and colonized by them for nearly two hundred and fifty years, it is notorious that its extent, resources, prospects, state of society, etc., are little understood in Europe. It is still more surprising, that in Great Britain, which has held Canada as a colony for more than a century, the general impression is extremely erroneous, and almost always unfavorable; especially when compared with the opinion which prevails there concerning our Republican neighbours. And no wonder, for these latter lose no opportunity of extolling their own land as the most favored on earth; and if they notice Canada at all it is to draw a contrast to our prejudice.

To judge from the tone of the press, as well as from the common idea both across the border and in England, we should be led to suppose that the United States were possessed of resources, and were making unparalleled progress, (such as no other part of the universe could attempt to rival); whilst Canada, on the other hand, had no resources, was devoid of enterprise, and effected no improvements. Too many suppose it to be a dreary, inhospitable region, the inhabitants of which are either too spiritless to seek a better home or too ignorant to know that other lands offer greater privileges. These are extremely false impressions, and were it not that I am confined to the limits of a short paper, I should enquire into their causes, and endeavour to suggest a remedy. At present, however, I shall confine myself to stating a few encouraging facts with reference to our country, and pointing out a few of the many advantages it possesses over other lands.

The extent of Canada, and the abundance of its resources, entitle it to a place amongst the first nations of the globe. All that it wants to give it this position is a population to develope those resources, which Nature has so bountifully furnished. That this desideratum will be furnished before many years shall have elapsed, is evident to every person who considers the progress that the country has made during the past decade, and the still greater progress, both public and private, now in contemplation. Nor must it be lost sight of, that as a nation advances, it advances with accelerated speed. The improvements already effected, the state of progress already attained in Canada, required more energy and enterprise on the part of the few, who, with limited means and many discouragements, have hitherto borne the burden, than ten times the improvements will require after this, when a teeming population, together with increasing wealth and power, will enable public spirited and enterprising citizens, backed by free and enlightened government, to attempt and accomplish schemes of advancement which have up to the present been regarded as utopian.

It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the men entrusted with the public interests that by every improvement by which any one of the many resources of the country is developed, the welfare of the whole community is promoted. Every branch of industry which is introduced is a new mine of wealth, a sinew of power added to the nation; and every improvement effected not only suggests others still greater, but also provides means for their accomplishment.

I have already remarked that all Canada wants, to make it one of the greatest of nations, is an industrious, intelligent and enterprising population to develope her vast resources. That this desideratum will soon be supplied there is full assurance, but how soon, depends very much upon the present generation of Canadians and their rulers.

At the boundless resources of Canada I shall but glance; and a glance, I think will be sufficient to prove what I have advanced with reference to her prospects. The lines of sea coast on the Atlantic and the Pacific, including an area which stretches from Labrador to British Columbia, and measures nearly four millions of geographical square miles—present facilities for commerce, navigation and fisheries, unsurpassed by any other country. The numerous rivers and lakes which abound in the interior, when properly improved, will be as serviceable for internal communication as the former for commerce with foreign nations. Add

to these advantages the railroads, those projected and those in process of construction—and where is there a country that affords greater facilities for railroads,—and our channels of traffic will bear comparison with those of our proudest rivals.

Canada seems peculiarly favored with every essential for her development into a great commercial country; an inexhaustible supply of the best varieties of timber for export and ship building; an unlimited quantity of whatever is necessary for the equipping and furnishing of any number of vessels; abundance of valuable products for export; and endless quantities of imports required. In view of these advantages, and possessed of ample means for uninterrupted communication with the most distant regions of the globe, am I not justified in asking, What is there to hinder Canada from becoming one of the greatest commercial countries of the world?

The mineral resources and manufacturing interests of Canada are, as yet, I may say, but little known, even to her own inhabitants; but there are indications that in these also she is destined to excel. So far as the geological survey of the Dominion has proceeded, the results are highly satisfactory; and the coal mines of the Maritime Provinces and British Columbia, as well as the silver mines of the Lake Superior region, are extraordinarily remunerative. The discoveries already made are sufficient to justify the prediction that in mineral wealth the Dominion will be nearly independent of the world. For manufacturing purposes she has resources, both in material and means, which only require to be developed and fostered in order to put our country on a par with the most favored nations of western Europe.

But it is to her agricultural resources that Canada is chiefly to be indebted for her greatness. For in the variety of the produce of the soil she has few equals, and the superior quality of these products is acknowledged wherever they are known. It is a mistake to suppose that what we now see is all that the soil is capable of producing, either as to variety, quality or quantity. The present yield on the land now partially cultivated might easily be quadrupled by scientific farming; by the same means the quality would be vastly improved; and it is evident that many varieties of grain and fruit, now almost unknown in the country, may, by judicious cultivation, be made to flourish abundantly here, as they do in the lands where at present they are almost indigenous. Various kinds of grain once supposed to belong to more southerly regions have been already tried with success in even some of the northern sections of our country,

and skill and diligence alone are required to make them a profitable branch of Canadian industry.

Our climate some have supposed to be prejudicial to agricultural pursuits; but, on the contrary, the heavy snows and severe frosts of winter anticipate the labors of the plough, and by pulverizing the soil, prepare it for the various crops which our ardent summer sun brings in due time to perfection.

One cannot but regard with admiration the skill and science displayed so far in the varied improvements of Canadian husbandry, the greater part of which have been the work of scarce a decade. The waste places of our country, as a natural result of such healthy innovation, are being rapidly cleared, cultivated and transformed. Waving fields of golden grain are now to be seen, each year, where comparatively a short time ago the aborigines of the forest waved their mighty heads as if in obdurate defiance of the onward march of civilization. We have experienced what important changes a few years of scientific farming, and even that on a very limited scale, are capable of unfolding. Canada promises by the industry and science of her sons to become one of the richest and most productive countries in the world. Let such bright indications animate us to continued exertion, and if the soil is the treasury from which the largest portion of our future wealth must flow, our material progress will greatly depend upon the skill of the husbandman. Agriculture may be followed as a simple rude art, yielding but a scant return, or it may be practised as one of the noblest sciences which can engage man's physical and mental energies, furnishing material wealth and abounding plenty. If the gods place labor before honor, and if there be dignity in human industry, then labor and industry become ennobled under the guidance of enlightened judgment, and bring in their train a thousand blessings. As the poet observes,

"Life without works is unenjoyed,
The happiest are the best employed,
Work moves and moulds the mightiest birth,
And groups the destinies of earth."

But while agriculture is and will continue to be our chief and leading interest, there are some other objects which must engage the enterprise of our people. The husbandman raises more than he can consume, while in this age of high civilization he is the creature of a thousand wants, which the land cannot directly supply. We must look to commerce and manufactures to supply these wants and to give a marketable value to all our surplus

produce. We must foster in every legitimate way those branches of industry which will give population to our towns and cities, secure to us a home market, and consolidate our wealth. Canada has already been successful with her foundries, tanneries, furniture factories, woollen and paper mills, engine and machine shops. There is a marked spirit of enterprise abroad in our country ; and when we look at our noble St. Lawrence, and those great inland, unsalted seas—the Upper Lakes—which, along with our canals and railroads, afford such facilities for carrying on all our commercial exchange ; and when we remember our boundless extent of water power,—the certain local demand for all manufactured products, together with the fact that we have a territory that can sustain a dense and teeming population,—We must feel that our country presents an unlimited field for human enterprise.

We have in our grainfields and workshops inexhaustible mines of honest wealth, and to bring it within our reach we require nothing but the intelligent application of modern science. It is to science that we are indebted for all those discoveries, inventions and appliances, which have given to the world so many comforts, and ministered so powerfully to our present high civilization that the peasant of to-day enjoys more luxuries and is more refined than the prince of a few centuries ago.

Let us turn for a moment to the happy circumstances under which we are living, and see how everything around us is calculated to induce private and public enterprise, and inspire our Canadian people with love and attachment to their country. Here all even the poorest emigrant that comes to our shores, can, by honesty and industry, become the possessor of broad and fertile acres ; holding their own deeds direct from the Crown ; whilst in every improvement they make, whether of utility or taste, is adding to their future comfort and wealth, and to the comfort and wealth of those who are nearest and dearest to them. But this is not all. We are living in a state of society where the invidious distinctions of rank and fortune are little known, and industry and integrity command everywhere respect, while the highest posts of honor and emolument are fairly and equally open to all. We have thus every natural incentive to honorable ambition, and a thousand considerations to animate us to strain every nerve for our country's advancement. It would, perhaps, not be out of place to observe that we cannot unfold the page of history without perceiving that every nation which has risen to eminence in ancient or modern times, has been distinguished for the patriotism of its sons. What led the countless conquests, the glory and renown

of ancient Greece and Rome? What absorbing passion animated the immortal Wallace to such deeds of heroic valor and self-sacrifice as he performed, that to the end of time his memory will be warmly cherished in the heart of every patriot? What noble enthusiasm led the British soldier—regiments not exclusively English, but composed alike of men from the rural districts of England, Ireland and Scotland,—to scale so gallantly the heights of Alma, and to rush into sanguinary but triumphant struggle at Inkerman? And we unhesitatingly reply, a far higher honour than that of gain. The fame of British valour and the integrity of the Empire, the future peace of Europe and the cause of liberty throughout the world, hung upon the issue. But in this utilitarian and wealth amassing age, at least in this region of the globe, "our swords" have been turned into "ploughshares" and our "spears" into "pruning hooks;" and in the great neighboring Republic and elsewhere we behold the spirit of nationality inflamed with a desire to excel in the arts of peace, rather than in those of war, and to attain commercial preminence, rather than military glory. May this great public virtue continue to manifest itself amongst us, stimulating the improvement of our agriculture, the increase of our manufactures, and the extension of our commerce, and imbuing all with an earnest concern for the country's material prosperity, until at last the motherland, old England, who, when the welfare of her people and the cause of humanity demanded it, led the nations of the earth in war, shall teach them "to learn war no more." "Zeal for the public good," says Addison, "is the character of a man of honour, and must take the place of pleasures, profits, and most other private ends. Whoever is wanting in this motive is an open enemy or inglorious neuter to his race in proportion to the misapplied advantages with which nature or fortune has blessed him."

In conclusion I would observe that it requires no argument to show that a region extending over several million square miles, and possessed, at almost every part, of so many natural advantages, is destined to become a great country. The question, then, What is to be the character of the population of this great country? is one that must come with thrilling interest to the heart of every Canadian patriot and philanthropist. That the country is abundantly capable of sustaining a numerous, enlightened, and happy people, is clear; but it is a sad truth, that the richest blessings of nature and Providence may be so abused as to prove evils instead of benefits; and many countries evidently designed to be the abodes of light and liberty, health and happiness, have

been turned into scenes of ignorance and vice, misery and degradation.

With such views before them it is not surprising that all intelligent Canadians should watch with jealous anxiety the doings of their rulers, and the progress of their national institutions—acts and institutions pregnant with an incalculable amount of weal or woe to the many millions, who, in a few years, will form the population of Canada.

From this essay politics are rigidly excluded ; and without entering their domain one may remark that anxious care and patient attention are due from every inhabitant of our land, to all those acts of our Legislature which bear upon our civil, religious, moral and educational institutions and projects—in short, all acts relating to the social, civil and religious prosperity, of what may yet become a great nation.